

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CAIRO 05640 301038Z

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ACTION SS-30

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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8038

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

S E C R E T CAIRO 5640

EXDIS

BEIRUT FOR BAGHDAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR EG

SUBJ: SADAT UNDER FIRE

SUMMARY: ALEXANDRIA COMMUNIQUE HAS LANDED GOE IN THE SOUP. SADAT'S EFFORT TO "COORDINATE ARAB STAND" BY TACKLING GOJ/PLO PROBLEM HEAD-ON HAS EARNED HIM BRICKBATS FROM ALL SPECIES OF FEDAYEEN AND NOTABLE LACK OF PURBLIC SUPPORT FOR "ARAB SOCIALIST" STATES. EGYPTIANS, PATHFINDERS OF ARAB REVOLUTION, MAY HAVE AWKWARDLY PAINTED THEMSELVES INTO CORNER "REACTIONARIES". HOWEVER,ALTHOUGH HUSAIN PULLS LITTLE ARAB WEIGHT, KING FAISAL DOES, AND HIS VISIT TO EGYPT THIS WEEK MAY BE VITAL FACTOR IN STIFFENING EGYPTIAN BACKBONE IN FACE OF BARRAGE OF CRITICISM. END SUMMARY.

1. WE BELIEVE PRESIDENT SADAT IS SOMEWHAT SHAKEN BY VIRULENT FEDAYEEN REACTION TO ALEXANDRIA COMMUNIQUE. HAVING ENBARKED COURAGEOUSLY ON "STAGE OF BILATERAL CONSULTATIONS" DESIGNED TO CREATE BRAVE NEW WORLD OF ARAB SOLIDARITY AT RABAT, HIS FAILURE TO BRING ABOUT VITAL STEP OF PLO/GOJ MODUS VIVENDI

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 CAIRO 05640 301038Z

NOW THREATENS TO BRING DOWN THE WHOLE HOUSE OF CARDS, THOUGH

HE STILL HOLDS TRUMP IN KING FAISAL.

2. INTERNALLY, WE KNOW SADAT IS CONCERNED ABOUT HIS REGIME'S POPULARITY IN FACE OF VIOLENT DENUNCIATIONS FROM PALESTINIANS AND LACK OF PUBLIC SUPPORT FROM "SOCIALIST" ARAB STATES. IT IS COMMON TALK HERE THAT EGYPTIAN DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT, WHILE FINE THING IN ITSELF, WAS INFERIOR DEAL TO SUBSEQUENT SYRIAN DISENGAGEMENT. FURTHER, THERE ARE PURELY DOMESTIC PROBLEMS WHICH ARE POTENTIAL HINDRANCES TO SADAT'S FREEDOM TO PURSUE INDEPENDENT, CREATIVE, UNPOPULAR FOREIGN POLICY. THUS, FOR EXAMPLE, TROUBLE MAY BREW WHEN THE STUDENTS RE-ASSEMBLE IN SEPTEMBER. THAT GOE IS CONSIDERABLY CONCERNED ABOUT THIS WAS DEMONSTRATED BY OFFICIAL PRAISE IN LOCAL PRESS JULY 29 FOR CHAIRMAN OF ALEXANDRIA UNIVERSITY STUDENT COUNCIL AND BY OBVIOUS EFFORT TO COOPT HIM INTO THE ESTABLISHMENT. WE BELIEVE TRADITIONAL PROBLEM OF OPPOSITION FROM RELIGIOUS RIGHT IS ALSO RECEIVING ACTIVE GOE ATTENTION. OVER THE WEEK-END, PRESS REPORTED TWO GESTURES OF GOE GOODWILL TOWARD CONSERVATIVE MUSLIMS: FIVE MUSLIM BROTHER WHO HAVE SERVED 20 YEARS IN JAIL WERE RELEASED, AND HEAD OF EGYPTIAN HIGHER COUNCIL FOR ISLAMIC STUDIES WAS PRESENT AT MEETING BETWEEN SADAT AND HIGH-RANKING REPRESENTATIVE OF KING FAISAL. FURTHER, SADAT IN HIS JULY 27 SPEECH VOWED TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT INFLATION, WHICH IS MOST IRKSOME OF ALL LOCAL PROBLEMS.

3. EXTERNALLY, SADAT FINDS HIMSELF IN UNUSUAL EGYPTIAN POSITION OF ALIGNMENT WITH ARAB PRINCES, WITH NO STAUNCH ALLY IN "SOCIALIST" CAMP. HIS ARAB POLICY IS QUITE CLEARLY THE SAME AS KING HUSAIN'S, AS STATED BY GOJ OFFICIAL INTERPRETATION OF COMMUNIQUE (AMMAN 4361), AND THOSE GOVERNMENTS WHO HAVE INFORMED ARAB LEAGUE OF SUPPORT FOR POSTPONEMENT OF SUMMIT READ LIKE CATALOGUE OF WHAT EGYPTIANS USED TO CALL ARAB "REACTIONARY REGIMES": OMAN, UAE, BAHRAIN, AND JORDAN.

4. SADAT'S TRUMP CARD, OF COURSE, IS KING KAISAL. THE WEIGHT OF SAUDI POLITICAL SUPPORT IS NOT TO BE TAKEN LIGHTLY IN VIEW OF FAISAL'S FINANCIAL BACKING OF FATAH, HIS PIVOTAL IMPORTANCE RE USE OF OIL WEAPON, AND REMNANTS OF POLITICAL INFLUENCE HE RETAINS WITH OIL-EXPORTING GULF STATES (OTHER THAN KUWAIT). NEVERTHELESS, GOE MUST FEEL SOMEWHAT ISOLATED AND IS PRESUMABLY SEEKING URGENTLY TO BRING LEFTIST GOVERNMENT INTO FOLD. ALGERIA,
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 CAIRO 05640 301038Z

IN GOE VIEW, IS ALMOST HOPELESS CASE. SARG'S TIME-TABLE APPROACH TO NEGOTIATIONS APPEARS TO DIFFER RADICALLY FROM GOE APPROACH. ALL THIS MAY EXPLAIN GOE'S SUDDEN WILLINGNESS TO WOO THE IRAQIS. CAIRO 5597 REPORTED GOVERNMENT-INSPIRED AHRAH ARTICLE ENDORSING GOI/GOE DIALOGUE IN VIEW ALLEGED RADICAL SWITCH OF BAATHI WORLD VIEW, AND PRESS JULY 29 REPORTS IRAQI MIN EDUCATION, WHO HAS JUST PAID VISIT TO CAIRO, HAS INVITED HIS GOE COLLEAGUE TO PAY RETURN VISIT AND HAS ARRANGED TO RECRUIT EGYPTIAN TEACHERS

FOR IRAQ.

6. CRISIS IN EGYPTIAN ARAB POLICY IS SYMBOLIZED BY ALEXANDRIA COMMUNIQUE. WE BELIEVE IT UNLIKELY THAT, AS SUGGESTED BY BEIRUT 8716, COMMUNIQUE WAS DELIBERATE PLOY TO SHOCK MODERATE PALESTINIANS INTO STATESMAN-LIKE APPROACH TO NEGOTIATIONS WITH HUSAIN. IN OUR VIEW SADAT THOUGHT HE HAD MODERATES IN THE BAG. IT SEEMS TO US HE HAS MISJUDGED HIS OWN INFLUENCE OVER ARAFAT, ARAFAT'S INFLUENCE ON LPO, AND CHARISMA OF GOE REGIONAL LEADERSHIP, WHICH SEEMS MORE AND MORE TO HAVE BEEN BASED IN LARGE PART ON PERSONALITY OF NASSER HIMSELF.

7. SO FAR, GOE SEEMS TO BE FACING UP TO PALESTINE/GOJ PROBLEM AND SHOWS NO SIGNS OF CAVING IN. IN JULY 23 SPEECH, SADAT FIRMLY POINTED TO TWO OPTIONS: ARAB COORDINATION OR ARAB CIVIL WAR. IN LAST THREE DAYS FAHMY HAS MET AT LEAST ONCE WITH EVERY ARAB AMBASSADOR AND CHARGE. ONLY CHANGE IN GENERAL GAME PLANS AS OUTLINED PUBLICLY ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS IN RECENT PAST BY PRESIDENT SADAT IS UNCONFIRMED AHRAH FEATURE STORY JULY 29, QUOTING MENA DESPATCH FROM DAMASCUS, THAT CONTACTS ARE CURRENTLY UNDERWAY TO ARRANGE EGYPTIAN/SYRIAN/PALESTIAN SUMMIT CONFERENCE IN CAIRO. "IT IS EXPECTED" THAT MEETING WILL BE HELD ON SECOND WEEK OF AUGUST. ITEM CONTINUES THAT CONTACTS BETWEEN CAIRO AND PLO INTENSIFIED FOLLOWING RELEASE OF ALEXANDRIA COMMUNIQUE. IN COURSE OF THESE CONTACTS" GOE WELCOMED "ANY MEETING" INTENDED TO COORDINATE VIEWS BETWEEN CONFRONTATION STATES AND PLO.

8. NEEDLES TO SAY, OUR CONTACTS IN GOE ARE CONCERNED THAT "UNFRIEDONLY" STATES WILL MAKE POLITICAL HAY OF EGYPTIAN DIFFICULTIES. AS NOTED IN TRIPOLI 828, QADHAAFI IS NO DOUBT PLEASED AS PUNCH. KNOWLEDGE THAT THE SOVIETS ARE HOVERING
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PAGE 04 CAIRO 05640 301038Z

IN THE WINGS OF ME ARENA DARKENS ALREADY GLOOMY ATMOSPHERE AT EGYPTIAN MFA.
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